622 Kalba. There was a lengthy dispute as to who should succeed to the sheikhdom, with the appearance of a wicked uncle who tried on several occasions to do away with his young nephew, who would legally succeed his father. The sheikh of Ras-al-Khaimah tried by various means to acquire the sheikhdom, but eventually the British Government stepped in and appointed the Sheikh of Sharjah's nephew as Regent. This wily Arab was not at all anxious for young Ali to ascend the throne when he came of age, and various devices had to be thought of to keep Ali out of harm's way.

At one time the British Resident in Bushire had the idea of sending him to the Princes' School in Persia, an academy run on English public school lines, to which the sons of the Indian princes were sent. It was considered that not only would such a step be prudent from a political point of view, but that it was advisable for the future ruler to have a sound education. Young Ali, however, would have none of this, and he ran away after the first term. At the time of our visit, he was under the protection of our host, the Sheikh of Sharjah. Handsome in a negro fashion, he was a sulky-looking youth and, I was confidentially informed, was already a past-master in the traditional desert intrigues.

144 827 173 Although the sheikhs of Oman are exceedingly proud of their descent, which in some cases extends to the sixteenth century and derives from some Saiyed, or descendant of the Prophet, there is a fair amount of intermarriage with the more beautiful of their slaves. Thus, even in the aristocratic Qasimi family, a powerful tribe which once ruled the greater part of Oman—and to which Sultan bin Saqr belongs—there are traces of negro blood. Oddly enough, the Arabs are not in the least ashamed of such admixtures. They believe that it gives them virility and strength, and there may be something to be said for the theory.

264 A lull had fallen upon the conversation, when one of the sheikh's sons approached his father and began to whisper in his ear. I imagine it had something to do with the preparation of the meal, for the sheikh rose from his chair and beckoned us to follow him to a long, narrow room on the other side of the courtyard. We passed through a fretted doorway and found ourselves in the salle à manger. The floor was liberally strewn with rugs and, on a damask cloth in the middle, there reposed about ten main and five secondary dishes of rice, curry, chipatties, dried fruits and vegetables. The principal dish, in front of which the sheikh seated himself,